Detention of Wagons of Timber Brought From North-East

926. SHRI AMAR SINGH: Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that 93 wagons of timber. brought from North-East, have recently been detained at various Railway Stations including Nangloi in Delhi, Tinsukhia in Assam, Rajpura in Punjab and at other Railway Stations;

(b) if so, what are the details thereof, including the value of timber; and

(c) whether the timber mafia has since been traced and if so, the details thereof and the action taken against him?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI BABU LAL MARANDI): (a) In exercise of powers vested with the Ministry •under orders of Supreme Court dated 15.1.1998 and 13.1.2000 in Writ Petition No. 202/1995, a total of 177 wagons suspected to contain illegal timber have been detained for carrying out physical verification and investigations at varioius places.

(b) and (c) Out of above, physical verification in respect of timber contained in 62 wagons have been completed. It has been found that these wagons contained 3244 cubic meter of sawn timber as against 2530 cubic meter of timber mentioned in the transit passes. The value of total timber has not been assessed. On the initiative of the Ministry, High Power Committee for North-East constituted by Supreme Court has suspended all clearances given to 60 wood-based units/consignors.

Implementation of Varahi Hydel Project

927. SHRI JANARDHANA POOJARY: Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Karnatka Government had requested for release of 275 ha. of forest land for implementation of the Varahi Hydel Project

for irrigation of 15,702 ha. of land in the Udupi and Kundapur tehsils of Udupi district in Karnataka in 1993;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether necessary clearance has been accorded;

(d) if not, the reasons therefor; and

(e) by when the clearance is likely to be granted?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI BABU LAL MARANDI): (a) No Sir. The Government of Karnataka has not submitted any proposal for Varahi Hydel Project. However, the State Government has submitted a proposal for release of 275 hectare forest land for implementation of Varahi Multi-Purpose Project in Dakshina Kannada District. Chief Secretary, Karnataka has clarified that Varahi Hydel Project and Varahi Multi-Purpose Project are 2 distinct projects.

(b) to (e) A proposal for Varahi Multi-Purpose Project involving 1929.60 hectare forest land was submitted by Government of Karnataka for clearance under the Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980 in February 1984. The State Government was requested in May 1984, February 1985, May 1986 & July 1986 to furnish some lacking details which were not submitted by the State Government. In view of para 4.14 of the guidelines to the Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980, the proposal was closed/rejected for want of information in December 1988. Later on the State Government submitted a revised proposal in January 1993 involving diversion of 275 hectare forest land. The State Government has been asked to submit some essential details in February 1993 and reminded in July 1995 & October 1999. In absence of furnishing of complete details and information by the State Government, the Ministry is unable to proceed further for considering approval to the proposal.